

It's GRAMA, not Grandma –

but they both have a sunny disposition

This is the first in a series of articles leading up to Sunshine Week, March 13-19. Sunshine Week is a nation-wide initiative promoting open government and access to public information. Watch for more articles on the Davis County Clerk/Auditor's Facebook page.

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Grandmas are known around the world for their sunny dispositions, and that's a trait they share with GRAMA, Utah's Government Records Access and Management Act.

GRAMA is what's known as a "sunshine law," because it is designed to shine a light on government activities by recognizing the public's right to access governmental records. Passed by the Utah State Legislature in 1991, the intent of GRAMA is to balance the public's right to easy and reasonable access to information concerning the conduct of government with the individual's right of privacy and the need to restrict access to some records for the public good.

Like your grandma, GRAMA is all about sharing information. Grandma will tell you the names of your great-great-grandparents and a funny story about their wedding day, and GRAMA may allow you to see their actual marriage certificate. Grandma will show you the strange scar on her arm from getting a small pox vaccination, and GRAMA will let you get a copy of your own vaccination history. Grandma will tell you about the time she ran for city council, and GRAMA will help you with your own run for office by allowing access to a list of registered voters. At its heart, like your grandma, GRAMA is there to empower you.

But your grandma and GRAMA may differ in a few ways. Your grandma might not think twice about telling someone you're single, or giving your personal cell phone number to a family friend, while GRAMA restricts access to an individual's private information. Grandma might overshare about your latest health scare or that time you were booked into jail, while Utah's GRAMA controls medical information and protects your booking photo unless you're actually convicted of the crime ... and for the public good, GRAMA won't let your friends access details about jail security to help you break out.

You are your grandma's favorite, and you're GRAMA's favorite, too. According to the act, GRAMA should favor public access when counter interests are of equal weight. That means if your reason for wanting access to certain records is equal in importance to the government's reasons for not releasing them, the fact that you are a member of the public should tip the scales in your favor.

Knowing that GRAMA is there, protecting you by keeping government transparent and accountable, should bring you comfort – like a hug from your grandma.